

## DISCUSSION POINTS

**Q. Excellent presentation including interesting information from Japan where obesity rates are very low. Japanese culture focuses on health from young to elderly with strong family orientation and free public exercise outdoors in parks and open spaces. Recent new investment initiative around healthy weight in this country suggested paying people to exercise. Is this a good use of funding? What will it achieve long term?**

There was a research study in 2018 which looked at incentives including paying people to lose weight. One group were paid in relation to the amount of weight they lost, the other group joined because they had a personal drive to lose weight. At the end of the programme the paid group lost significantly more weight, but unsurprisingly, they gained their weight once the payments stopped. Interestingly the self-motivated group lost more weight over a longer period of time.

Perhaps rather than paying people to exercise they could offer cheaper fees to gyms and exercise classes providing more equitable access for those on lower incomes. Higher obesity levels in areas of deprivation raises the question - can people afford exercise?

**Q. Reviewing publications relating to this new investment of £100m into weight management, why do they use such damaging illustrations, promoting a blame and shame culture?**

Interesting discussions around language and terminology within media articles with reference to words like 'fighting obesity' related to similar terms of 'fighting cancer' or 'battle with weight'. Using war metaphors are not helpful. They give the impression that we can 'conquer' these conditions if we are strong enough but if we 'lose the battle' then we are weak.

['War on cancer' metaphors may do harm, research shows | Cancer | The Guardian](#)

We need to change attitudes and culture so maybe investment in training of healthcare staff is a good place to start by improving modes of communication.

With obesity costing the NHS £6bn, the inference in some articles encouraging 5lbs weight loss, is that it is about saving the NHS money rather than the health benefits or improving quality of life. Will this make an overweight person feel guilty that they are a burden on the NHS and increase reluctance to seek help?

**Q. What are the obesity rates like in your home country?**

Thanks to one delegate who shared her experiences from Romania where obesity rates are very high. This is partly due to a cultural bias against healthy eating, for example, high meat consumption is the norm so being vegetarian as a 'health choice' is frowned upon.